

# DIALOGUES

ON THE

## RIGHTS of BRITONS, &c.

### DIALOGUE THE FIRST.

[Price Two-pence; or, Three Shillings and Six-pence the Quarter of a Hundred.]

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# DIALOGUES

ON THE

## RIGHTS

OF

B R I T O N S,

BETWEEN

A FARMER,

A SAILOR,

AND

A MANUFACTURER.

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DIALOGUE THE FIRST.

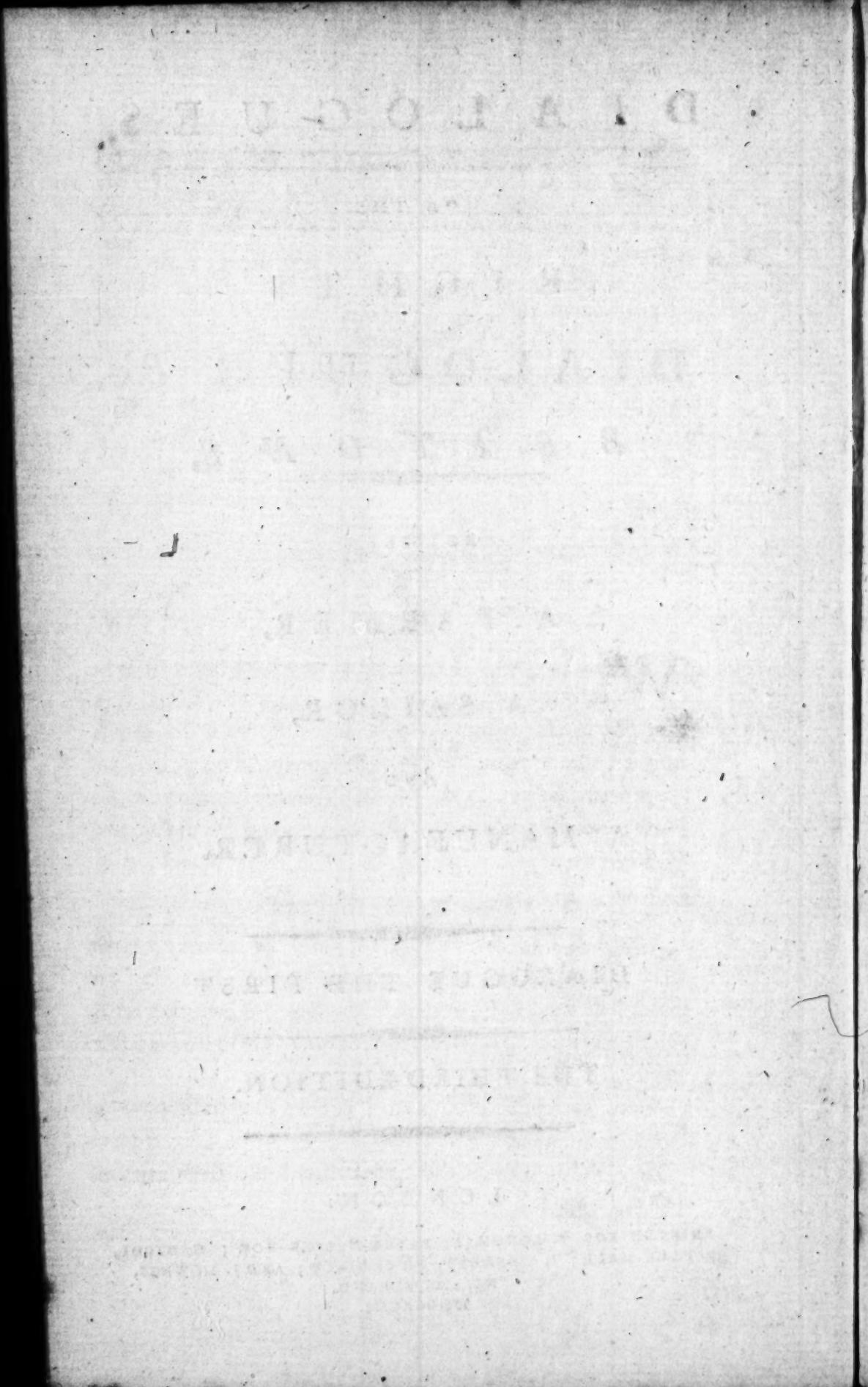
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## DIALOGUES, &c.

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FARMER.—SAILOR.

*'Farmer.'*

WELL, Jack ! I rejoice that you have made so successful a voyage, and I am happy to inform you that the prize money which you got with so much honour the last war, and which I prevailed on you to let me lay out for you in the funds, is almost doubled by the prodigious rise of Stocks. But here comes an old friend of yours—

*Enter MANUFACTURER.*

*Sai.* And I am sorry to see that old friend has a new face. Good God ! what an alteration ! how shy he looks ! What cheer, my lad ? Mayhap you have met with rough weather ? Never mind, we can't always have a fair wind.

*Man. (furlily).* No, and I believe we shall have a storm before a calm.

*Far.* Why, what is the matter now ? No fresh misfortune, I hope ?

*Man.* Only my cursed landlord has threatened to seize my goods again if I do not pay my rent in a week ; and God knows I could as well carry the house on my shoulders. But all those matters will be set to rights by-and-by, and landlords will find themselves in the wrong box.

*Far.* How is it that every thing of late seems to have gone cross with you ? Formerly you were in a thriving way, and full of mirth and gaiety ; now you are moping and peevish, and always meeting with some misfortune or another. Whence comes this change ? You have had no illness in your family to pull you back.

*Man.* Why, to tell you the truth, my time has lately been taken up a good deal out of my business in a better way ; and though I feel the inconvenience in family affairs, I am wiser than ever I was in my life.

*Far.* More foolish, you should have said, since, by your neglect, you have brought your family into trouble. But pray tell me in what manner you have been employed.

*Man.* I have been studying Mr. PAINE's "*Rights of Man,*" and other Works of the like kind ; and I have been attending Clubs which have been established in our town for the purpose of obtaining those Rights.

*Sai.* And who the devil has dared to fall foul of those Rights in this Country ? I'll be d—d if any foreign force will venture to attack them while they are defended by such a Navy and so many gallant Tars. And as to matters at home, I never heard before but that every man's Rights were protected by Law.

*Far.* And so they are, and ever will be, while the Constitution remains in force and vigour ; thank God, there is not a single Right which man can enjoy, that is not enjoyed and secured, in the completest manner, in this Country. But if you (*to Manufacturer*) have been studying

Mr.

Mr. Paine, I am not at all surprized that your mind is become restless, your hands idle, and your circumstances embarrassed. These are the Rights which he endeavours to establish among the laborious part of the Community. He seeks to infuse the poison of discontent into their minds, in order to make them his tools to promote confusion. He wishes to disturb the State, to overturn the Government, to demolish the Constitution, and to throw the Kingdom into disorder, that he may gain those advantages in a scramble which he knows can never be procured by his merits. But seeing that the country is flourishing, and its inhabitants free, loyal, and happy, he finds that there is no chance of succeeding in his diabolical schemes, unless he can render the people discontented and disaffected. He therefore endeavours to blind their eyes to all those glorious and solid advantages which have hitherto made the name of an Englishman respected, and his condition envied all over the world.

*Man.* Then I find you have read his works, as well as myself?

*Far.* During my late confinement I read them at the request of a friend; and I never saw so much malice, so much falsehood, or real ignorance in any work in my life. My age, observation, and experience, aided by a good education (for you know I was first intended for the Church), enable me, I hope, to form a tolerable judgment on most subjects, and, I believe, you will not doubt that my intentions are honest; and I am glad of an opportunity to undeceive you, and to restore your former attachment to the Constitution of your Country.

*Man.* That will be a difficult matter, for Mr. Paine has convinced me that we have been hitherto without a Constitution in this Country.

*Sai.* The devil he has ! and yet that's odd enough. I have heard of the *British Constitution*, and as a good one too, all over the world.

*Far.* Pooh ! Pooh ! PAINE knows well enough that we have a Constitution, which has long been the admiration of the world ; and though his taste is too depraved to admire what is so excellent, it excites his envy and his malice : while he denies its existence, his grand wish is to see it demolished ; and, in order to promote its destruction, he labours to prejudice against it every one who will listen to him.

*Man.* But I wish to know where this famous Constitution is to be found. I have seen a copy of the late Constitution of *France*, in a neat little book, containing the whole complete from beginning to end, and I dare say the next will be drawn out and published in like manner ; but I have never had a copy of the *English Constitution* put into my hands, nor have I heard of any such thing being kept at the *Tower* or anywhere else.

*Sai.* Nor I neither : but though I never saw a plan of it, I always understood that it was made of the best materials ; that it was a long time in building ; and that, being well put together, it has weathered many a hard gale.

*Far.* (*to Manufacturer*). You have hit upon an essential difference between the *English Constitution* and that which the *French* lately projected. The latter was indeed drawn up in great form upon paper, but it was only to be found upon paper ; but the former is a solid and well-tried System, founded upon Experience, and long existing in actual practice. *THEIRS* was a mushroom plan grown up in a night, and demolished as quickly as it was framed—the produce of Fancy, and containing nothing more substantial than mere theory. *OURS*, like the English Oak, has arrived by slow degrees

at maturity, and, like the English Oak too, is useful and durable, forming the strength, while it secures the lasting happiness of the Nation.

*Sai.* You could not have explained it better to my mind. English Oak is, as you say, slow in growth, but then it excels all other timber. That of America grows much quicker, but the ships built of it go sooner to decay. There's nothing like English heart of Oak, and that our enemies well know.

*Man.* I cannot say I am yet satisfied. The late French Constitution, it is true, had bad luck, and lasted but a short time, but yet in my little book I can see what it was. I can "produce it in a visible form; and quote it article by article \*." Now can you in like manner produce the English Constitution? Where is that to be found?

*Far.* I admire your perseverance about trifles. Nothing seems likely to satisfy you but a schedule or inventory of the Constitution, as if it were to be put up to auction: but it is our advantage that there is no occasion to publish a code or plan in order to make it known; for thank God, it is so well ascertained, and so universally understood, as to render such a measure quite unnecessary. The French indeed wanted a code to describe what had never before existed in point of fact; but their paper Constitution fell to pieces before they could well get it into their heads; while ours is deeply engraven on the hearts of Englishmen.

*Man.* Then you allow that there is no code to which we may refer for the Articles of the British Constitution?

*Far.* Indeed I do not. The Constitution of this country is to be found blended and incorporated with that venerable system of written and unwritten laws which is justly the adoration of Englishmen; derived from the same

\* Rights of Man.

origin, and, having advanced together to maturity, they act upon, explain, and support each other ; their connection and mutual dependence are such that they must stand or fall together ; and the enemies of one are the enemies of both. It is therefore among the sacred registers of our private rights (the most proper place surely) that the principles and securities of our public rights are to be found. Many of those principles have struck their roots deep among the original foundations of the common law ; while in the statute-book the various securities and privileges obtained by the people at different times are faithfully recorded—There we find The Great Charter of our Liberties, commonly called *Magna Charta*, obtained so long ago as the reign of King John, and confirmed by many subsequent statutes.—There also we find the Petition of Right, being a Parliamentary ratification, in the reign of Charles the Ist, of the rights of the people—There also we find the immortal *Habeas Corpus Act*, the last, the firm, and immoveable barrier of personal liberty —Afterwards, by the Bill of Rights, and lastly by the *Act of Settlement*, made in the beginning of the present Reign, we find the succession to the Crown and the functions of Government limited and guarded in such a manner as to prevent the possibility of encroachment, and to secure the lasting felicity and freedom of the People.

*Sai.* Now sink me if I think any ship could have kept her log-book better ! This is what I call a fine course, a good reckoning, and a prosperous voyage.

*Man.* And so we must pore over old musty *Acts* of Parliament in order to discover this famous Constitution ?

*Far.* I do not know what you call old musty *Acts* of Parliament ; but I think it is a great advantage and a solid ground for rejoicing, that our rights have been established and

and enjoyed for such a length of time. They are thereby rendered more respectable, as well as more secure; and accordingly the people hold their *Magna Charta* in a veneration proportioned to its antiquity.

*Man.* But I for one have very little inclination to study and still less ability to purchase, the voluminous collections of the Statutes.

*Far.* It is not at all necessary that you should; for the History of the Country contains an adequate code of its Constitution, and displays to the comprehension of every one the manner in which that Constitution grew, the circumstances under which the several parts of it were formed, and the principles upon which it was founded. In perusing such history we shall see that the people have, from time to time, insisted upon and obtained such advantages as Experience, the mother of True Wisdom, pointed out to be necessary for their secure enjoyment of social liberty. They did not act upon mere opinion, which differs so much in different persons, and therefore affords but a very weak foundation to build upon; they improved those opportunities which events threw in their way, of resisting and of vanquishing the abuses which they had actually endured, and of providing effectual means against the repetition thereof. Hence the remedy was always adequate to the evil—one source of oppression was cut off after another—advantages were secured as they were obtained—and at length the Constitution, being founded upon experience, and matured by time, arrived gradually at the perfection in which we now behold it, and became calculated both for utility and duration, every part being fitted for the purpose it was destined to answer, and the whole forming a well-connected and well-proportioned System.

*Man.* It seems, however, that the *French* did at once what the *English* were ages about?

*Far.*

*Fur.* You should rather say, the *French* pretended to do at once what the *English* were so long in performing; for the former have only verified the old saying, that what is hastily done is ill done. Great changes can only be made to advantage by very slow degrees. The late *French* Constitution was only a matter of experiment, and it was soon found to be impracticable, and speedily vanished into air—"Like the baseless fabric of a vision, it has not left a wreck behind." *Ours* is the result of experience, and after a lapse of ages stands as firm as a rock. The Makers of Constitutions may hence derive a very useful lesson, and learn the difference between Theory and Practice. If all the Philosophers in the world were to assemble in order at once to frame a Constitution for a country, however beautiful and alluring their plan might be in appearance, there is very little chance that it would suit the manners, the habits, and the national character of the people, or that it would be practicable when it should come to be tried. But the *French*, despising even the advantage of calm and orderly discussion, began with removing all those powers and authorities which, however in some instances abused, were the only security for order, and attempted the great work of forming a Constitution in the midst of Tumult, Riot, and Confusion,—when calm Reason was obliged to give way to Passion and to Outrage,—when popular Commotion, artfully fomented, and displayed in Devastation and Massacre, kept the whole Kingdom in constant agitation and alarm. Judge if a Constitution thus constructed was at all likely to be useful or even practicable!

*Sai.* I should think the State-vessel must drive before the wind in such a storm, and that she would founder without ever coming in sight of port. It must be very foolish to think of building or mending Constitutions, or doing any such nice work, in so hard a gale. At sea we

never

never venture to lay a ship under repair but in calm weather and smooth water.

*Far.* Your supposition has been exactly realized: one of the finest countries in the world has been ruined, and is become at length such a scene of horror that Human Nature shudders at the spectacle: and after four years so spent, with Revolution following Revolution, the whole business remains to be done, and a Constitution is still to be formed, which will probably meet the same fate as that before it. But it has been the happiness of *England* to obtain, by far different means, a Constitution which secures the Happiness and Freedom of the People, and which is of course beloved by them; adapted in its nature to their temper and habits, and friendly in its exercise to order and tranquillity. I hope I have made it appear that this Constitution is authenticated by written vouchers, and those of a much more respectable kind than any new-fangled code produced by Fancy and never confirmed by Practice. But the grand excellence of the *British* Constitution still remains to be noticed, namely, that it exists not merely upon paper or parchment, but in actual practice: its benefits are hourly experienced; it is to be found in enjoyment; it is best known by its effects, as a tree by its fruits; and no more requires a pompous description to convey an idea of its value than the genial warmth of the Sun, or the benevolent showers of Heaven. The actual advantages possessed by *Englishmen* as their sure and unalienable Birthright afford the most forcible and the most feeling description of the Constitution, and exhibit to the eye and the heart *Magna Charta*,—the *Habeas Corpus* Act,—the Bill of Rights, and all the other Sources and Safeguards of our Liberties in their noblest form: and these advantages are peculiarly manifest

in that Liberty and that Security which every Individual enjoys in this Country, which are the grand objects of Society, and the most valuable blessings it can bestow.

*Sai.* People make such a pother about Liberty, that I thought it included every thing ; but I don't remember hearing much about what you call Security.

*Far.* And yet without Security Liberty would be the worst of Evils. If a people could live without Government and Laws, they would possess perfect Liberty without Restraint, and consequently without Security ; that is to say, there would be no Regulations or Public Force to prevent Individuals from doing whatever they pleased ; of course the Strong would tyrannize over the Weak, the Good would be at the mercy of the Bad, and a constant scene of Rapine, Violence, and Bloodshed would prevail. It is necessary, therefore, for Mankind to resort for Protection to a State of Society, where Individuals are restrained by the compulsory obligation of Laws from doing what may be pernicious to Others or detrimental to the State. It is plain, likewise, that in Society a Portion of that Liberty which would belong to a State of Nature is giyen up as a necessary Price for Security. And Social Liberty means a Right to do whatever is not forbidden by the Laws ; which Liberty flourishes in the highest Perfection in this Country, where there is no Power but that of the Laws to controul the Actions of any Person.

*Man.* But can you say that these Laws are equal for Rich and Poor ?

*Far.* Certainly I can ; and if you had trusted to your own observation, instead of listening to the false insinuations of malicious Incendiaries, you would never have doubted it ; for nothing can be more obvious, than that

all

all persons, whatever their birth, their station, or their circumstances may be, are of equal consequence in the eye of the Law. The Rights of an *Englishman* are not the Rights merely of the Wealthy and the Great, but of ALL without distinction. The same Laws extend their protection alike to all; and whether a Nobleman strikes a Labourer, or a Labourer a Nobleman, it is equally a violation of the Law, and the same Justice is open to Both. The grand prevailing Principle of our Constitution is to provide as much as possible for the Peace, Security, and Happiness of every Individual, in whatever state or condition he may appear; and the essential Rights of Human Nature, which it is the object of Society to protect, are as sacred in the person of the Lowest as of the Highest. No man, however Rich or Great, can oppress the poorest Subject of these realms, no Station nor Wealth can furnish the least protection from the penalties of the violated Laws; or prevent an injured Citizen from obtaining redress for his wrongs. Such are the important and invaluable privileges of Britons; while the grand bulwark of all, Trial by Jury, protects the enjoyment of our Rights from every danger, and forms the corner-stone of our Liberties.

*Man.* It surely, however, is no proof of the equality of the Laws that the poor are obliged to sustain so many hardships and burthens, while the rich revel in luxury at their expence.

*Far.* Such cant is exactly the kind of argument upon which Mr. Paine chiefly relies for exciting discontent in the lower orders of Society; and I beg you to remark what a strong proof it affords of the falsehood as well as of the malice and absurdity of his assertions. So far from its being true, that burthens are imposed on the poor to supply the luxuries of the wealthy and great, as he would have you believe, the case is exactly the reverse. The bur-

thens

thens of the State are imposed upon those who are in circumstances to support them, and, as much as possible, according to their circumstances ; while the greatest possible care is taken to prevent their falling upon others. Thus, for instance, no part of that large proportion of the taxes which is raised from Houses is paid by those who depend for subsistence on their bodily labour. Many other instances of a similar nature might be mentioned, proving that the principle of taxation in this country is to lighten and relieve as much as possible the situation of the labouring part of the community, and to collect the necessary revenue from those who are better able to supply it, and in proportion to that ability. But in what part of Mr. PAINE's writings is this important truth to be found ? His aim being to deceive, it did not suit him to make any such acknowledgment. It would have overthrown his system, and defeated his views. Thus you see to what deception they expose themselves who give any credit to such a man. Who that attended to Mr. PAINE would imagine that among all that industrious class whom he represents as " paying " their earnings in taxes to support Court extravagances," scarcely a single individual ever sees a tax-gatherer enter his habitation ?

*Man.* Good God ! you astonish me : and yet, upon consideration, what you say is perfectly true ; I see that I have been misled in this matter.

*Far.* And so will every one be who takes Mr. THOMAS PAINE for his oracle. But I beg you to consider further, that while the condition of the poor is alleviated as much as possible, the luxuries of the rich are converted into sources of revenue. Is there a luxury which is not made to contribute its due share towards the public burthens ? and are not the very same articles taxed when they are used as luxuries, and exempted from taxation when they

appear

appear only as necessaries?—of which the duties upon Servants may be mentioned as an instance. Nay, in some articles, which the peculiar and pressing circumstances of the moment had rendered it necessary to subject to a temporary additional tax, did not the Legislature in the last session seize the earliest occasion afforded by the flourishing state of the finances to take off those burthens, expressly because they affected those classes which were least able to support them\*? And are we not in expectation, that the continued and increasing prosperity of the Nation, aided by the judicious and successful plans of a wise and able Minister, will shortly procure more extensive alleviations, and in time, perhaps, relieve us from all our burthens? One thing, indeed, might hinder such desirable events from taking place, and make all our brilliant prospects vanish into darkness; I mean the success of Mr. Paine's endeavours to introduce confusion and anarchy. But I am persuaded the people are too sensible, as well of the advantages of their situation, as of the malice of his views and the ruinous tendency of his projects, to pay any attention to what he says; and they will be little disposed to rely either on the friendship or the wisdom of a man, who has never had any reputation either for principle or prudence, who has neither character nor property at stake, and who evidently has no other object than to create disturbance among a happy and contented people.

\* One of the articles from which the above additional duty was taken off, furnishes a striking proof of the Farmer's observation, that the same article is a subject of taxation when used as a luxury, and of exemption when used as one of the necessities of life; for the additional duty on wax and spermaceti candles was retained, while that on other candles was taken off.

*Sai.* Pray who is this TOM PAINE who makes such a noise? I think I have not heard any one talked of so much since the time of *John the Painter*.

*Far.* His history is soon told. He was brought up a staymaker under his father at *Thetford*, in the county of *Norfolk*. He somehow became an exciseman in the year 1762; was discharged for malpractices in 1765; found means to get himself restored in 1766; but, being incorrigible, was discharged again. While in that office, besides taking bribes from others to defraud the revenue, he dealt in exciseable commodities himself, and so made his interest and his duty draw different ways. He was twice married, though the death of his first wife has never yet been ascertained; and upon his second marriage, in defiance of the laws, he was falsely entered upon the Register as a bachelor. He gave his wives plenty of ill usage, but allowed them none of the comforts of matrimony. He was a bad son, and broke his mother's heart. He never had a friend whom he did not reward with ingratitude. Finding no chance for success here, he thought it best to decamp and went to *America*; where, during the war, he shewed himself an enemy and traitor to his country, and did it all the harm he could. But, always consistent with himself, he betrayed his new friends the *Americans*, and was, therefore, by them turned out of an office which his rancorous enmity to *Great Britain* had procured him. Returning to this country, he had the audacity to libel the King and Constitution; and, being prosecuted for his breach of the laws, has fled from justice. Lastly, having thus been twice a Refugee *Englishman*, and once a Refugee *American*, he is now become a *Jacobin Frenchman*, and is plotting with our ancient and implacable foes to bring destruction upon his native land.

*Sai*

*Sai.* Well, it is no bad thing that the shark has left our coast, though it would have been better to have given him his deserts. But perhaps his new friends may do that business for him.

*Far.* Not at all unlikely. But I think we have spent more breath on him than he deserves ; and at present I must part with you, as I have a particular engagement. To-morrow I shall be glad to see you both again.

THE END OF THE FIRST DIALOGUE.

